GUIDE TO ALTERNATIVE TRAVEL

Employees may combine official and personal travel. This includes taking roundabout routes, using modes of transportation other than those authorized, and arriving earlier or returning later than is necessary to perform official duties. When any of these events happen for personal convenience, such arrangements are called alternative or indirect travel. Some special rules apply.

When alternative travel is performed, the **extra expense**, **including extra travel time**, **is borne by the traveler**. Reimbursement of alternative travel is claimed by submitting a two part voucher.

- The first part of the voucher shows the cost of the most direct itinerary; that is, the one that would have been taken in accordance with the travel authorization, the supervisor's instructions, and official government travel policies; and
- The second part of the voucher shows the cost of the alternative or <u>indirect</u> itinerary; which is the one actually taken, including transportation, per diem and other expenses which would have been allowed had the supervisor authorized the trip as taken by the employee.

Parts one and two of the voucher are compared and the lesser amount is paid to the traveler.

Costs claimed on both parts of the voucher must be allowable under the laws, regulations, directives and Comptroller General or GSA Board of Contract Appeals Decisions governing travel. For example, The Fly America Act, 49 U.S.C. para 1517 provides that all government financed foreign air travel must be by U.S. air carriers...to the extent that service is available. If an employee elects to employ alternative travel and use a foreign air carrier the alternative cost of the foreign air service can not be

reimbursed by law even if it is less expensive.

Travel Authorizations

Ideally, a <u>specific trip authorization</u> states what travel is expected in order to accomplish the purpose of the trip. It prescribes the date of departure, date of return, routing, and mode(s) of transportation required. When a traveler has a choice of airports, the airport chosen must be based on the total economic advantage considering all costs, including not only transportation but also per diem and duty time spent in accomplishing the travel. For example, driving or taking ground transportation to a more distant airport may allow use of lower fares or more frequent flights thereby reducing time and subsistence costs.

Travelers with <u>blanket authorizations</u> and travelers with very general specific trip authorizations are advised to consult with the authorizing official or supervisor before planning alternative travel to insure that all parties agree on the most cost effective route, mode(s) of transportation, departure and arrival times. This forms the basis for the first part, the direct itinerary portion, of the voucher, which is then compared with the second part of the voucher, the actual (indirect) itinerary taken by the traveler. In the absence of specificity in the authorization, direct itinerary costs will be allowed on the most cost effective basis using the prudent person rule.

Prudent Person Rule

This fundamental rule requires an employee on official travel to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and expending personal funds.

Other Rules Which Apply

Here are some other rules which apply:

- 1. The lowest airfare available to the employee will be used for the direct itinerary portion of the travel voucher. This fare will usually be the GSA "city-pair" contracted air fare which must be used unless:
 - a. Flights are not available in time to accomplish the purpose of travel, or use of city-pair service would require the traveler to incur unnecessary lodging costs increasing the total cost of the trip; or
 - The contractor's flight schedule is inconsistent with Departmental policy that travel is to be performed to the maximum extent possible during normal working hours; or
 - c. A noncontract carrier offers a lower fare available to the general public, the use of which will result in a lower total trip cost to the Government including the combined costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses. This exception does not apply if the contract carrier(s) offers a comparable fare or if the lower fare offered by a noncontract carrier is restricted to Government travelers on official business.

Use of a noncontract carrier for official travel must be approved and documented on DL Form 1-2024.

Care should be taken not to set up unrealistically high air fares for the comparison in the direct itinerary portion of the voucher.

2. The traveler should exercise the same degree of care in developing the cost estimates for the direct itinerary portion of the voucher as exercised when arrangements were made for the alternative travel or indirect portion of the voucher. If a special fare, such as a supersaver fare based on an advanced **non-refundable purchase**, is used for an indirect route, the direct route portion of the voucher

should be based upon a fare that confers the same or similar costsaving advantages to the government if the use of such a fare is reasonable.

Employees should be particularly careful when obligating themselves to common carrier arrangements for alternative travel which cannot be canceled without penalties, since they may be personally liable for arrangements other than those authorized by their supervisors. When non-refundable fares have been specified through supervisory channels, changes elected by the traveler to accommodate personal travel plans may result in the traveler being responsible for penalties.

- 3. In preparing the direct itinerary portion of the voucher, the traveler is not required to establish an itinerary that involves travel at odd or unusual hours or requires remaining at a temporary duty point over a weekend solely for travel purposes.
- 4. Government contractor-issued charge cards (American Express) may only be used for official business; therefore, when a traveler mixes personal and official travel, care must be taken to charge only those items which the traveler may reasonably expect to have reimbursed.
- 5. Government-owned vehicles (GOVs) and contracted city-pair rates for transportation may be used only for those segments of a trip that are fully consistent with the direct itinerary. Neither may be used for any portion of personal travel.
- 6. The authorization of a particular mode or modes of transportation does not defeat the employee's right to use modes of transportation other than authorized. For example, a rental car may not have been approved on the authorization, but may be used and its cost included in the indirect itinerary portion of the voucher. However, if collision damage coverage or other insurance is purchased, the amount for these items may not be included in

either the direct itinerary or indirect itinerary costs since they are not reimbursable items. The direct itinerary portion of the voucher, is limited to the authorized mode(s) of transportation and other expenses allowed under the Federal Travel Regulations.

- 7. The rate used to calculate the use of a **privately-owned motor vehicle (POV)** on the indirect itinerary portion of the voucher is 31.0 cents per mile*. In calculating the direct route costs portion of the voucher, the authorized rate for use of a POV, based on availability of a GOV, is used.
 - a. When it has been determined by management that the use of a GOV is advantageous to the Government and no GOV is available, the rate is 31 cents per mile.*
 - b. When it has been determined by management that the use of a GOV is advantageous to the Government, a GOV is available and the employee is neither personally assigned a GOV nor committed to the use of GOV, and the employee uses a POV as a matter of personal preference, the rate is 23.5 cents per mile.*
 - c. When it has been determined by management that the use of a GOV is advantageous to the Government, and the employee is personally assigned a GOV or committed to the use of a GOV, or the employee would not normally be allowed the use of a POV, the rate is 10.5 cents per mile.*
 - * Note that these rates were effective for travel performed on or after January 1, 1998 and are subject to change.
- Items on both the direct itinerary and indirect portions of the voucher are audited subject to the rules governing those items.
 For example, lodging receipts are mandatory. The actual lodging

receipt will be used to support the lodging claim on the direct itinerary basis. When there is no receipt for lodging, such as when a traveler stays with friends or relatives, there may be additional local transportation expenses which would not have occurred had the traveler stayed in commercial lodging. These costs are claimed and audited as transportation on indirect itinerary portion of the voucher.

- 9. Excess travel time is charged to annual leave if travel is performed during duty time. Lodging and per diem are not permitted for any day in which more than four hours of annual leave are taken. Leave must be approved in advance by the supervisor and is subject to the rules governing absences from duty. Leave taken while in travel status must be reflected on the employee's travel youcher.
- 10. Payment of per diem on non-workdays may be allowed only to the extent necessary to accomplish alternative travel of the nature claimed. Normally, per diem would be allowed on those days when the traveler:
 - a. is laying over for a previously scheduled common carrier flight that results in significant cost savings to the government, e.g., fares that require a Saturday night layover; or
 - is progressing by surface transportation toward the temporary duty location or returning to the permanent duty station for a significant portion of each day for which per diem is requested.

Per diem may not be claimed when the employee is laying over at an interim point or at the TDY site without benefit to the government, and is not progressing toward the final destination for a substantial portion of the non-workday.

Per diem may not be paid for weekends and holidays when the

employees is in a leave status at the end of the workday before the non-workday(s) (Friday for most employees) <u>and</u> at the beginning of the workday (Monday for most employees) following the non-workday(s) for more than one-half of the prescribed working hours for that day.

- 11. Voluntarily **returning home or any way interrupting the temporary duty** is considered alternative travel and reimbursement claims must follow the principles outlined here. Voluntary travel, unlike directed travel, must be on the employee's own time.
- 12. Performing alternative travel rather than following the authorized travel may affect the employee's benefits under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, the Federal Tort Claims Act, and the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees' Claims Act.

Sample Alternative Travel Voucher

An example of an alternative travel reimbursement voucher follows at the end of this guide. In addition instructions on how to complete an alternative reimbursement voucher using Travel Manager software are included.

Additional Guidance

For more detailed guidance, please refer to Department of Labor Manual Series (DLMS),

Vol. 7, which covers travel and transportation or consult with your supervisor or the financial officer serving your organization.

Paragraph 1-4.3 of the FTR provides a limit on reimbursement based on the constructive cost of traveling to and from the temporary duty area. Thus local travel cost at the temporary duty area are separate from constructive travel costs to and from the temporary duty area.

SAMPLE COST COMPARATIVE TRAVEL VOUCHER

Direct Itinerary:

Fred Traveler was authorized to travel from Atlanta to Winston-Salem to do an inspection. He travel authorization states that he will fly to Winston-Salem on March 2 (Sunday) and return March 7 (Friday). He is authorized to take a taxi from his home to the airport on March 2 and a Limousine on March 7. While in Winston-Salem he will lodge with friends on March 5 and he was authorized mileage for that day.

Indirect Itinerary:

Alternatively Fred Traveler chose to drive his own car (POV) to Winston-Salem on March 3. He lodged with friends on March 5. He received permission to take leave on March 7 (Friday) and return to Atlanta on March 9.

NOTE: The travel voucher for this sample was prepared using Travel Manager Software. Travel Manager software treats the "Direct Itinerary" and the "Indirect Itinerary" vouchers as separate legs of the same trip by totaling the two vouchers. However, Travel Manager software adds another page to the voucher and on that page it accounts for the alternative itineraries separately and selects the least cost itinerary as the appropriate one for reimbursement. Travel Manager records the value of the least cost alternative itinerary on the front page of the travel voucher. The instructions for preparing a cost comparative travel voucher using Travel manager is found at the end of this case.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING A COST COMPARATIVE TRAVEL VOUCHER USING TRAVEL MANAGER SOFTWARE

 Prepare a voucher for the Direct Itinerary. Use the mode of transportation and itinerary which was approved on the Travel Authorization as the basis of this portion of the voucher.

Once the Direct Itinerary portion of the voucher is completed, to prepare the alternative or indirect itinerary portion of the voucher, follow the instructions below:

- 2. From the menu bar, select **Document**. From the drop down menu select **Trip**
- 3. Make a copy of the Direct Itinerary portion of the voucher. Select **Trip** then from the Trips for Voucher xxxx, select **Copy**.
- 4. In the Copy Trip window, select **OK**. Note that Copy From Trip is "1" and Copy To Trip is "2".
- 5. In the Trips for Voucher xxxx window, highlight Trip 2 and choose **Select**. Note that on the main screen the **Trip No:** field now displays "2".
- 6. Select the **Itinerary** button. To indicate that Trip 2 should be compared to Trip 1: Select **Type**.
- 7. From the drop-down list, select CONSTRUCTED.
- 8. Modify the voucher to reflect the alternative/indirect itinerary.

Travel Manager will treat the "Direct Itinerary" and the "Indirect Itinerary" vouchers as separate legs of the same trip by totaling the two vouchers. However, Travel Manager software adds another page to the voucher

and on that page it accounts for the alternative itineraries separately and selects the least cost itinerary as the appropriate one for reimbursement. Travel Manager records the value of the least cost alternative itinerary on the front page of the travel voucher.